2:Musil S-4, 5 (no date)1928 MD4 Rwala MD4

CHAPTER IV

THE TENT AND ITS FURNISHINGS

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE TENT

The tent is made of pieces of coarse black cloth known as *šuḳḳa* (pl., *šḳaḳ*). The *šuḳḳa* is usually 60 to 70 centimeters broad and 15 to 60 *ḏrâʿ* (11.4 to 45.6 meters) long. The tent cloth is woven either of pure black goat's hair — both the heavy variety, *šaʿar ṣâfi*, and the light, *nôl*, being used — or else of cotton, with which only a small amount of goat's hair is blended, this being called *kumbok*. The weaving of tent material is carried on by many inhabitants of the towns and villages, and the Rwala buy it from itinerant traders, Rḥejbâwijjât or Kbejsât, or from those who make it. An ordinary tent with one main pole, which is about twelve meters long and nearly four meters broad, requires at least eight *šḳaḳ*, each 15 *ḏrâʿ* (11.4 meters) in length. If they are of pure goat's hair, *šaʿar ṣâfi*, 1 *šuḳḳa* costs 8 *meǧîdijjât* ($7.20); if they are of *kumbok*, a *šuḳḳa* costs 3 *meǧîdijjât* ($2.70); a *šuḳḳa* of *nôl* costs 5 *meǧîdijjât* ($4.50). The back wall, *rwâḳ*, of such a tent costs 3 *meǧîdijjât*; the lower part, *sefle*, of it, 1 *meǧîdijje* (90 cents); 15 *ḏrâʿ* (11.4 meters) of a narrow strip of goat's hair for strengthening the tent material, *ṭarâjež*, costs 2 *meǧîdijjât* ($1.80); two poles cost 9 piasters (40½ cents); and then there are the ropes, sold by weight: 1 *roṭol* (2.56 kilograms) for 13 piasters (58½ cents). Thus the smallest tent made of heavy goat's hair costs at least 33 *meǧîdijjât* ($ 29.70). Every four years, or five years at the most, a new tent has to be set up.

When a man has bought the tent material, he hands it over to the women, who sew the tent under the supervision of an experienced old woman. The old woman gives the following directions: "Draw the separate pieces, *šḳaḳ*, close together, *ṣaffenhen*; sew them with coarse threads of goat's hair, *ḥajjetenhen*; in the middle sew on the *ḳoṭb* [a small round board measuring about ten centimeters in diameter and having in the middle a circular opening cut out, through which the top

2:Musil S-4, 5 (no date)1928 MD4 Rwala MD4

that they crawl in a long chain urging each other, *siž*, and even riding one on another, *ensâḳ*. *Ṣaḥṣaḥ* is a plain shut in by the low yet steep slope of a *ṭaraḳ*, or long flat ridge. *Šefa'* is the flat top of such a ridge. The ascent from the lower plain, *ṣaḥṣaḥ*, to this upper plain, *šefa'*, is quite difficult. The *dabwa'* locusts appear sometimes in such enormous masses that they fill the space between the lower and upper plains. 5. *Eltamm* (or *enǧama'*), gathered together. *Bel-ašfâḳ* — that is, what is dearest to and gladdens the heart most of all — are the sweet memories of love; but the poet for the last year has been tortured by unrest, *dawâčič*, and fears, *ẖfûḳ*. *Enẖafaḳ*, to be scared, to be filled with suspicion. 6. *Al-aṭrâḳ* are demonstrations of peace or friendship; *swâmiḥ* is forgiveness. *Ṣandûḳ*, a wooden box, frequently lined with tin plates; in inner Arabia it takes the place of our burglar-proof safe. There the poet had hidden many a secret unpleasant to him, but the heart learns them notwithstanding. 8. To allay his grief the poet took out from a wooden canister a few coffee beans, picked out on his palm the impurities mixed with them in the market, and then handed them to his companion, *nedîm*. The coffee beans are exposed in the shops in open bags, into which apple cores, date stones, spices, and the like often fall. Such admixtures are called *'aḏf*, a poetical expression for filth. 9. While being roasted coffee should be taken from the fire three times. In its preparation there is nothing more important than the roasting. *Sâḳ* is the long handle, much the worse for wear, of the pan used for roasting coffee. In the towns this pan is very small, but its handle is strong and ornamented. The poet sits in the room of his house, and the coffee is roasted in the same room before him. The coals of *raṣa*, which, when ignited, give a strong heat almost without smoke, are kindled on a square earthenware platter resembling a small trough. This hearth is either movable or attached to the earthen floor. During the roasting the window remains open so that the smell of the coffee can pass out of the room. And because the poet's house stands in the market place, the smell of roasted coffee is sensed in all the shops around. In the towns of inner Arabia the market place consists of a narrow street. 18. When the roasted and pounded coffee is being boiled, the burgher closes the window in order to save all its fragrance, which, like the coffee itself, has a narcotic effect on him. 19. The coffee is poured in from above,

2:Musil S-4, 5 (no date)1928 MD4 Rwala MD4

wad slightly, they touch the *kohl*, which is kept in a tiny tin box, *mikhale*, and then rub the color along the borders of the eyelids, believing that the use of *kohl* strengthens the eyesight. Many therefore even rub *kohl* on the edges of a telescope, being firmly convinced that the instrument then gives a much better view.

The woman's dress costs:

barîm, body belt	1/4	*mejidijje*	($ 0.22½)
ṭowb, shirt	2	*mejidijjât*	(" 1.80)
ḥwâṭi, belt	1/4	*mejidijje*	(" 0.22½)
maḥrûna, kerchief	2	*mejidijjât*	(" 1.80)
šitfa, head band	1/4	*mejidijje*	(" 0.22½)
ǧibbe, jacket	2	*mejidijjât*	(" 1.80)
mezwi, cloak	3	*mejidijjât*	(" 2.70)
maḥnaḳa, coral necklace	4	piasters	(" 0.18)
šelâde, pendant	4	"	(" 0.18)
ma'ḍad, elbow ornaments	4	"	(" 0.18)
faṭḥa, finger ring	4	"	(" 0.18)
zmâm, nostril ring	1/4	*mejidijje*	(" 0.22½)
Total	10	*mejidijjât*, 16 piasters	($ 9.72).

PEDDLERS; CARE FOR PERSONAL APPEARANCE; INFANTS; STAFFS AND CANES

Whatever the Rwala need for their finery and ornaments they either buy from the merchants who visit them when they are camping in the settled territory in the months of July and August, or from the peddlers, who accompany them the whole year through, even going to the inner desert with them. A peddler or wandering merchant is called either Rḥejbâwi or Kubejsi: Rḥejbâwi after the ancient town of ar-Raḥba, Kubejsi after his native place, the little town of al-Kubejsa. The terms Rḥejbâwi and Kubejsi have come to mean any wandering seller of textiles or general merchandise and are now applied even to merchants known to hail from other places. Thus a peddler from Bagdad is called a Rḥejbâwi Baṛdâdi or Kubejsi Baṛdâdi. When a youth overfond of dress, *dêḳa*, visits a wandering merchant to be measured for a suit of clothes, he gives his order in the words of the ancient verse: "Measure me, O merchant! for a shirt with long sleeves, measure me, O merchant! O Rḥejbâwi! *Faṣṣel li ǧâ ṭôṭer ṭâfi awâsi faṣṣel li ǧâ ṭôṭer ǧâ rḥejbâwi.*"

2:Musil S-4,5 (no dat 1928 MD4 Rwala MD4

of his tribe. If then his tribesmen steal anything from his native *ḫaṣîr* they must return it, and vice versa.

When a member of a hostile tribe is hired by a Rwejli to herd his camels and the herd entrusted to his care is attacked by his tribesmen, he is allowed by the raiders to keep for the Rwejli three she-camels, one for riding and two for milking, *ḳa'ada w-menâjeḥeḥ* or *rukûba w-ḥalûba*.

WANDERING PETTY MERCHANTS OR KUBEJSÂT

In almost every camp there lives a wandering merchant called a Kubejsi (pl. Kubejsât), although he does not always hail from the settlement of al-Kubejsa, near Hît on the right bank of the middle Euphrates. He comes with one or two camels laden with his goods, quarters himself as a guest with a Bedouin, pitches beside the black tent of his host his round white tent, *ḥejme*, and begins to sell cheap kerchiefs, men's shirts, material for women's shirts, shoes, and numerous other articles of clothing, *bẓâ'*, and also tobacco, coffee, *hejl* (cardamom), and some drugs. He pays the owner of the tent where he boards with cloth enough to make one suit. The chief gets nothing at all.

Few Bedouins buy for cash, but nearly all buy on credit, paying 25 per cent interest in five months. The creditor, *dajjân*, presses his debtor, *madjûn*, all the time to pay what he owes him. He seizes his camels and often even his mare so as not to lose anything; for no Bedouin would ever pay if not compelled to do so; yet there are times when he, too, finds constant running unbearable. It is said:

Mâ ḥamm illa ḥamm ad-dên
w-lâ waǧa' illa waǧa' al-'ên.

Nothing causes more torment than a debt,
And nothing greater pain than the eye.

The interest, *fâjeẓ*, on borrowed money must be paid at once in cash. For instance, on borrowing 10 *meǧidijjât* ($9.00), 12½ *meǧidijjât* interest is paid for a year in advance and the borrower has to declare that he has borrowed 12½ *meǧidijjât*, when as a matter of fact all that is left to him is 11½ *meǧidijjât*. Both the debt and interest must be paid at the

2:Musil S-4, 5 (no date) 1928 MD4 Rwala Mi

426 time when camel markets are held, namely in July or August
452 when the Bedouins camping in the tilled country sell thei
camels, *wakt al-mowsem*. Every debtor brings his bondsman
who declares in the presence of the creditor that so much i
owed and that the principal together with the interest, *marbaḥ*
will be paid at a certain stated date. Should the Kubejsi i
the meantime die, his host, *mu'azzeb*, collects the amounts du
to him and hands them over to his heirs. Debts contracte
with the Kubejsât, the Bedouins pay regularly enough, mainl
because they fear that otherwise no merchants would com
to them.

443 When the Rwala camp in a settled region, some of the bi
merchants send messengers to the prince to inquire whether h
will allow them to come to his camp with goods to sell. I
the messengers receive the prince's assurance that he will tak
them under his protection, *bwağh aš-šejḥ*, the wholesaler lose
no time in dispatching his employees to the camp, and befor
long from fifty to seventy white tents, *ḥijâm*, will be seen in th
prince's camp. In these everything is sold that the Bedouin'
heart desires. For each of these tents one new pack saddl
ḥedâğe, and one *roṭol* (2.56 kilograms) of green coffee ar
delivered to the prince as his due. Their stay in the cam
terminates about the middle of August, for at the end o
that month the Rwala usually return to the inner desert.

437 In the settled territory many merchants take camels i
435 exchange for their wares, thus enabling the Bedouins to provid
themselves with everything they need or desire. The sons o
the desert are like children in this respect, wanting all the
see or whatever takes their fancy and little caring whethe
they really need it or not. They buy all sorts of expensiv
things, often toys, which they soon spoil and then simpl
throw away as useless. As long as they have camels, or a
least the money received for them, they pay cash; when th
is gone, they either borrow money or buy on credit withou
worrying when or if ever the debt will be paid. It is a commo
saying in the desert: "Debt eats away the profit of him wh
borrows, *ad-dên ḳaṭṭâ' rizž al-mežbel.*"

POEMS RELATING TO ḲUṢARA' AND KUBEJSÂT

539[4] There are frequent references to both the stranger *ḳaṣ*
and the merchant in Bedouin poems.